

Historic, archived document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.



HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

Friday, April 11, 1941

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "COTTON SLIP COVERS." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

If you're looking around your house these spring days--trying to think of some way to make the place look brighter and fresher--I have some suggestions that may fit right into your plans.

My suggestions are about slip covers for furniture. If you sew--you can make these slip covers yourself. And, if you are working on a limited budget, you'll find that a lot of the attractive cotton slip cover materials on the market are very inexpensive.

But let me quote you some slip cover pointers from Bess Viemont Morrison of the Bureau of Home Economics of the U. S. Department of Agriculture. Mrs. Morrison is a textile specialist in the Bureau of Home Economics and the author of a brand new bulletin on "Slip Covers for Furniture."

Here are some of the things she has to say about selecting the fabric for making a slip cover.

"Generally," she says, "cotton is one of the best materials for making a slip cover. Cottons come in many attractive designs and colors. They come in a wide range of prices. They're durable and they can be laundered easily. Then, too, recent developments such as shrinkage control, colorfastness, and crease resistance make them even more suitable for slip covers."

As to the particular cotton you're going to buy--here are some tips from Mrs. Morrison.

"Some of the most serviceable cotton materials for slip covers are cretonne ---crash---and demin, either plain or striped. Others are lightweight tapestries, French ticking, drapery sateen, and damask.

"These cottons are what Mrs. Morrison calls the heavier ones. But she says some of the lighter cottons can be used for slip covers also. For instance, you can use gingham, and chintz, and percale. One thing to remember, though, when you use these lighter cottons--they usually come only 36 inches wide. That may mean that they won't cut to as good advantage as wider materials. Also the lighter cottons wrinkle more easily than the heavier cottons."

And here are some of the pointers to look for in a good slip cover material.

"First, look for a firm, close weave. You'll want a fabric that is firmly and closely woven because it will keep its shape better and tailor well. Also, it'll be easy to work with and will keep the dust from sifting through onto the furniture underneath.

"Next, find out all you can about whether or not the material will shrink. That is, see if the material will shrink enough to make a difference in the way a slip cover fits after it is washed. You won't want a material that shrinks more than about $3/4$ of an inch a yard at the most. If it shrinks anymore than that--your cover will be a total loss after first washing.

"As you know, some fabrics are guaranteed not to shrink more than a certain percent. This guarantee is usually printed along the edge of the selvage. If the selvage of the material is marked 'residual shrinkage of not more than 1 per cent' you can be pretty sure, washing won't alter the fit of the cover you make from it.

"Then, too, there are some materials that won't shrink--but which have no guarantee of any kind on them. The only way to make sure that an unlabeled

material will not shrink is to buy a sample of it first and find out. Get about 2/3 of a yard and wash it just the way you would the slip cover. It may seem to be a troublesome detail--but you'll save yourself grief in the long run.

"While you are looking for facts about shrinkage--also look for facts about colorfastness. You'll find these printed on the selvage too. If the material is guaranteed sunfast and washfast, you can be pretty sure it won't fade enough under ordinary conditions to make any difference. Or, if the label says that a vat dye has been used--that's as good as saying that the color is fast. For these vat dyes are some of the very best dyes. That's because they're developed right on the fiber and the color becomes a part of the fiber."

And now--just one more tip from Mrs. Morrison--about making slip covers. She says--

"If you're making a slip cover for the first time, start on one for a piece of furniture that's easy to cover. If you can make a plain box cushion, it won't be much more difficult to make a cover for a studio couch. Another piece of furniture that's easy to cover is an occasional chair. So are straight dining room chairs. On the other hand--those that are rather difficult to work with are wing chairs--barrel chairs--and divans."

As for actual making of the slip cover--I won't go into that. For you really need pictures to tell the story--and very detailed directions. So if you are going to make a slip cover and want some help--I suggest that you write for Mrs. Morrison's bulletin. In this bulletin, there are step-by-step directions and plenty of pictures.

The title of this bulletin is "Slip Covers for Furniture." Farmers' Bulletin 1873 of the U. S. Department of Agriculture. To get a free copy, write the Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C.

